

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7317

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 10493

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TPHY OSCI EG

SUBJECT: FAHMY AND AISHA RATEB'S CONFUSION

ABOUT US SUPPORT FOR WAFWA WA AMAL PROJECT

REF: CAIRO 10340

1. MY MEETING WITH FAHMY LAST NIGHT WAS THE FIRST IN SEVERAL DAYS. I HAD NO SOONER SEATED MYSELF WHEN HE ASKED ABOUT REPORTED USG INTENTION TO GIVE "70 MILLION DOLLAR" GIFT TO WAFWA WA AMAL SOCIETY. AISHA RATEB, FOLLOWING HER VISIT TO THE US, HAD SO ADVISED THE CABINET. SENIOR USG OFFICIALS HAD ALLEGEDLY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO DO THIS.

2. I TOLD HIM THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, SOME MISUNDERSTANDING HAD DEVELOPED ON BOTH SIDES. I KNEW THE CABINET HAD BEEN SO BRIEFED BY MINISTER RATEB, BUT I HAD TO TELL HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. I WENT THROUGH THE SAME EXPLANATIONS THAT I HAD EARLIER MADE TO AISHA RATEB AND TO MRS. SADAT ABOUT WHY WE ARE NOT ABLE TO DO THIS, BUT ALSO STRESSED OUR INTEREST IN THE PROJECT AND OUR INTENTION TO CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO SUPPORT IT.

3. FAHMY, WHO HAS NO GREAT USE FOR AISHA RATEB, SAID HE HAD SUSPECTED AS MUCH. HE WAS CONCERNED,
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HOWEVER, ABOUT WHAT MRS. SADAT'S REACTION WOULD

BE TO THE NEWS. I TOLD HIM I HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED IT WITH HER EARLIER IN THE DAY. WHILE DISAPPOINTED, SHE HAD TAKEN IT VERY WELL. I HAD ASSURED HER THAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT AND HAD MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF CIP ASSISTANCE AND PERHAPS GETTING ANOTHER BLOCK OF PL 480 FUNDS. FAHMY NOTED I HAD BEEN AT THE CONTRACT SIGNING CEREMONY (CAIRO 10350) AND SUGGESTED THIS IMPLIED A COMMITMENT. I SAID I WAS AWARE OF THE AWKWARDNESS OF THE SITUATION, BUT HAD ATTENDED THAT CEREMONY ONLY BECAUSE MRS. SADAT HAD DIRECTLY ASKED ME TO BE PRESENT. I COULD HARDLY DECLINE, BUT HAD SIMPLY BEEN A SILENT OBSERVER. FAHMY CONTINUED TO BE WORRIED THAT, EVEN THOUGH MRS. SADAT MAY HAVE TAKEN THE NEWS WELL, SHE WILL BE UPSET ABOUT IT LATER. HE WAS FRANKLY SKEPTICAL THAT WE WILL DO ANYTHING TO PROVIDE FURTHER ASSISTANCE.

4. HE THEN COMMENTED THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOT LIKELY TO APPROVE USE OF AID FUNDS IN ANY FORM FOR THE PROJECT. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE STATED THAT WHEN THE SECRETARY HAD MENTIONED THIS POSSIBILITY AT ALEXANDRIA, SADAT HAD INSISTED NO AID FUNDS BE ALLOTTED. THESE SHOULD BE ENTIRELY FOR OFFICIAL GOE PURPOSES. HE NEVERTHELESS HOPED WE COULD FIND SOME WAY TO CONTINUE OUR SUPPORT, SINCE MRS. SADAT IS SO DEEPLY INVOLVED.

5. COMMENT: I AM NOT AWARE OF SUCH AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT SADAT. IF FAHMY IS RIGHT, IT COULD POSE A PROBLEM IN OUR PLANNING RE A POSSIBLE SUPPORT. IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF THE SECRETARY COULD BE SOUNDED OUT ON THIS MATTER BEFORE WE GO TOO FAR DOWN THE ROAD. IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT THE AISHA RATEB MISUNDERSTANDING SEEMS TO CONTINUE TO PLAGUE US. I AM ENCOURAGED, HOWEVER, BY THE UNDERSTANDING SHOWN BY MRS. SADAT AND HOPE THIS WILL CONTINUE.

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